

508 "Hamara Hindostan Special"

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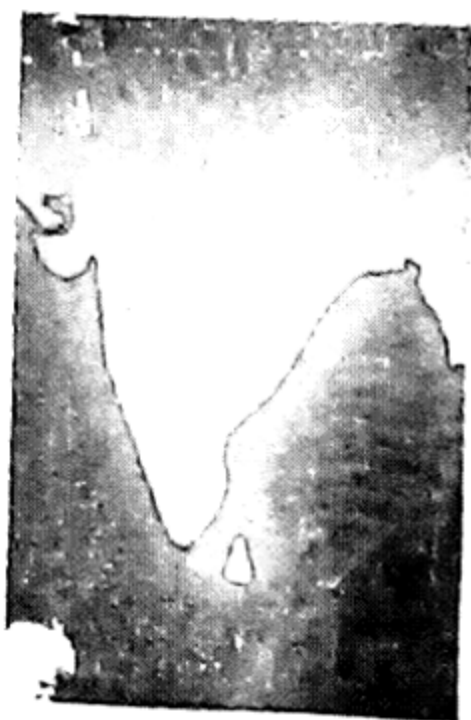
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IMPERIALISM

UNMASKED !

By

LOUIS FISCHER



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"Hamara Hindostan" Publications

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*India wants her freedom. Cripps denied it. They want to fight as a free nation alongside the United Nations. The Congress resolution clearly showed that they wanted Allied Soldiers to remain in India and help defend their country if they were given the status of a free and equal nation. India is United in demanding freedom immediately.....I warn that India will not give up the fight for liberty until she gets it.*

—LIN YUTANG.

F.522.M.

# IMPERIALISM UNMASKED !

British Imperialism is still one of the biggest and the most powerful imperialism in the world. Nevertheless from the long point of view of history, it is dead. Historically speaking, it has given up the ghost, and it is a dying thing. It may carry on yet because of some impetus it has got but it has lost the spirit to survive, it has lost the material resources that gave it strength, and what is more, it has lost the spirit and the heart to survive. I have not a shadow of doubt that British Imperialism cannot keep us down or prevent us from achieving independence to-day. Today we are strong enough to face it.—*Jawaharlal Nehru.*

GENERAL EDITOR:  
J. P. GUPTA

"HAMARA HINDOSTAN" PUBLICATIONS  
BOMBAY

*Hamara Hindostan Special No. 1*

## ***Imperialism Unmasked !***

*First Published November 1942*

*Reprinted November 1942.*

### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

Through the thick smoke screen emerges a lonely voice interpreting India's reaction to the World's events and her stand. We, Indians are indebted to him for his great service to humanity in general and India in particular. He fulfilled the mission of a true democrat.

This is a collection of articles which had appeared in the Free Press Journal and Bharat Jyoti.

—J. P. Gupta.

Printed by R. P. SHUKLA at the Vidyalaya Press, 23, Hamam Street, Fort, Bombay and Published by MANNALAL GUPTA, for 'Hamara Hindostan' Publications, 23, Hamam Street, Fort, BOMBAY.

## ***"Hindustan Hamara"***



*Sare jahan se achha Hindostan Hamara,  
Ham bulbulen hain iski yeh gulistan Hamara,  
Parbat woh sab se uncha hamsaya asman ka,  
Woh santari Hamara, woh pasban hamara,  
Godi men khelti hain iski hazaron nadiyan,  
Gulshan hai jiske dam se, rashke jahan hamara,  
Mazhab nahin sikhata apas men bair rakhana,  
Hindi hain ham waton hai Hindostan Hamara.*

And in case you have yet to master the national language here is the English translation:-

**The finest country in the world is our India,  
We are its nightingales, it is our rose-garden:**

**The highest mountain-range, the neighbour of the sky.  
Is our sentry and our protector:**

**In its laps play thousands of rivers.**

**Which make of it a garden that is the envy of the world.**

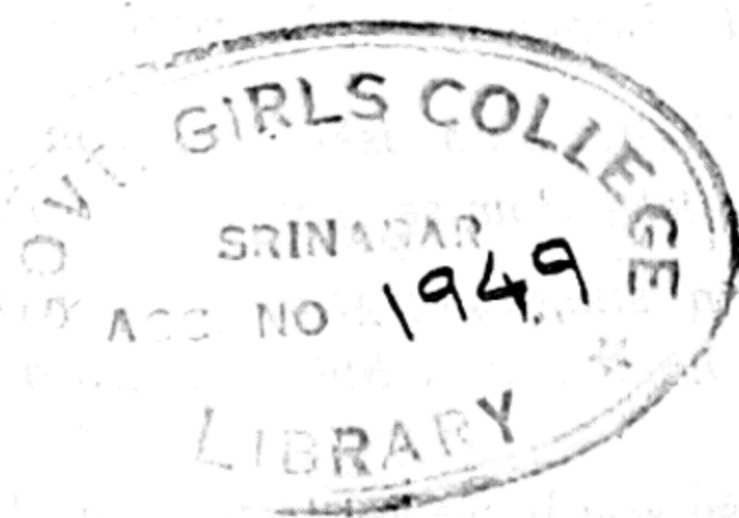
**Religion does not teach us to bear enmity towards one  
another.**

**We are Indians and our country is India.**

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The first country in the world is our land.  
We are its nightingales. It is our rose garden.  
Its highest mountain ranges are the fountains of life.  
Is our safety and our protection.  
In its lap play the winds of rivers.  
Which make of it a garden for the eyes of the world.  
Religion does not teach us to turn away from one  
another.  
We are Indians and our country is India.

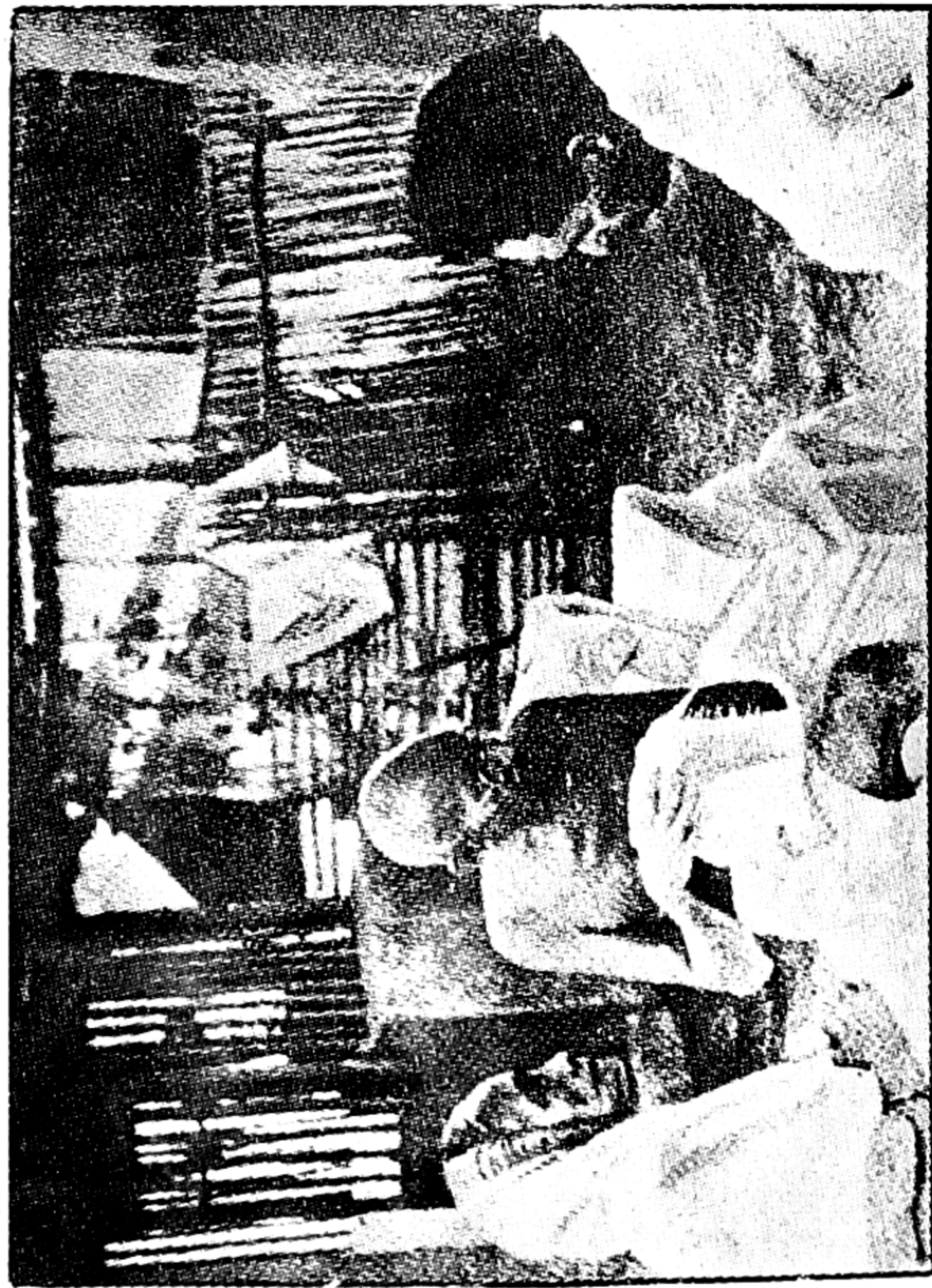
**LOUIS FISCHER**



**He carries Mahatma's message across the seas.**

( By Courtesy of ' The Bombay Chronicle' )





"I am convinced by your arguments that such a movement is not only necessary but inevitable." —Louis Fischer. (By Courtesy of "The Free Press Journal")



# Inevitable

After Louis Fischer had a long talk with Mahatma Gandhi wherein Mahatmaji explained his convictions with regard to the mass movement that he wanted to outline, Louis Fischer is reported to have said: **"I am convinced by your arguments that such a movement is not only necessary but inevitable"**, and added in the characteristic American way: **"Mahatmaji, if you would not start it now, I would."**

Louis Fischer, the author of this startling and informative article was in India recently studying the political currents of the country. The articles about India which are collected here appeared in "The Nation" of America, a paper that has made for itself a position in the world of current affairs, a position that was once enjoyed by "Fort-nightly Review", "The Truth", "The Spectator", etc. of Victorian Britain. To read "Nation" is to be educated in not only politics, but in all branches of modern thought. The very fact that Louis Fischer was selected by the "Nation" to report on Indian affairs is enough to indicate the high esteem in which Louis Fischer is held by the world of publicists in America. Louis Fischer is a free lance journalist and an author of repute. He is one of those whose writings influence the trend of the thought of the moment through a vast portion of the reading world as also the leading world. No apology is, therefore, needed for the publication of this book.

"What does India want? She wants everything that any other nation may claim for itself. To be free in India, as the Englishman is free in England. To be governed by her own men, freely elected by herself. To make and break Ministries at her will. To carry arms; to have her own army; her own navy; her own volunteers. To levy her own taxes; to make her own budgets; to educate her own people; to irrigate her own lands; to mine her own ores; to mint her own coin; to be a sovereign nation within her own borders. There is nothing to which any man can aspire in his own land from which the Indian must be shut out here."

"A large claim, you say. Does the Englishman ask less for himself in England? If yes, what is there strange that an Indian should ask the same for himself in India? It is not the "angle of vision" that needs changing. It is the eye, purified from pride, that can see clearly, and the heart, purged from arrogance, that can beat with healthy strokes."

"England and India hand-in-hand. Yes, that is our hope, for the world's sake. But that it may be so, Justice must replace inequality; for India can never be at rest, till she is free."—*Annie Besant.*

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# IMPERIALISM UNMASKED !

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Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, said to me. "Gandhi is the biggest thing in India." Now he has ordered Gandhi's arrest. I think all of us will have to pay for this. Trouble in India means prolongation of the war. It is therefore America's business.

## Battling For Empire

Shortly after the British were driven out of Burma, General Alexander, the commander of the British army in Burma gave an interview to the Press in New Delhi, India. The text of the interview was printed the next day in the Indian papers, "Burma must be reconquered". Alexander said, "It is part of the British Empire." Just imagine how this must thrill the Chinese soldiers who are at bay in Burma or the American pilots who are flying over Burma or the Indian troops who would have to retake Burma. They fight to give Burma back to the British Empire. Yet Alexander expressed what he felt. He is battling for empire.

## Churchill The Archimperialist

General Sir Archibald Wavell, now British Commander-in-Chief in India, takes a few moments occasionally to

continue the work on the second volume of his biography of General Allenby under whom he fought in the First World War. Wavell gave me a part of the manuscript to read. One chapter deals with the 1922 crisis when Allenby threatened to resign as High Commissioner of Egypt unless the British protectorate over Egypt were dropped and independence granted to the Egyptians. In brilliant prose reflecting a deep grasp of politics, Wavell described Allenby's struggle with the British Cabinet in London. Prime Minister Lloyd George, Foreign Secretary Curzon, Milner and other ministers opposed him. But of all the opponents of Egyptian independence, Wavell writes, "the most determined had been Winston Churchill" who was then in the cabinet.

Churchill led the opposition in the House of Commons against the 1935 Act of India under which India was ruled until the outbreak of this war and which granted some limited measure of self-government to India.

### **His England Includes India**

Churchill is a good imperialist by temperament, tradition, and conviction. So is the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery. He told me so. Neville Chamberlain was an appeaser because he was afraid that if England became involved in a war, his England, the England of money and privilege, would die. He was probably right. But Churchill says, No, England can fight a war and win it and remain his old England. Churchill's England includes India.

## Allies' Moral Position Challenged

We must be very clear, that Gandhiji's civil-disobedience move is not merely a matter of whether the police are stronger than the Indian nationalists. It raises the whole question of what we are fighting for. In my talks with Mahatma Gandhi in his village of Sevagram, I said we wanted the world to be a better place after the war. He replied "I am not sure it will be. I would like to see right now a change in the heart of England and in the heart of America. Then I may believe your statements about the future." Gandhi has confronted us with the problem of our moral position in the war.

## Gandhi Wants Allies To Win

It the British wish to imply that Gandhi is pro-Japanese they may do so; it only makes a settlement in India more difficult. Gandhiji is not pro-Japanese or pro-Axis. He is pro-British, he is pro-Chinese, he is pro-American. He wants us to win the war. But he does not think we can win it unless we enlist the support of Indians by purifying our war aims.

## Where Nehru Agrees

Jawaharlal Nehru, who actively demonstrated his anti-Fascist attitude in relation to Abyssinia, Loyalist Spain, and China, agrees with Gandhi on this matter. I was present at an open-air meeting in a park on the outskirts of Bombay addressed by Nehru. A crowd of some 30,000 men dressed mostly in white and women in bright



sarees gathered to hear what he spoke into the microphone. Before long a group of communists yelled: "This is a people's war." Now Communists are always well-disciplined and purposeful and they came to that meeting either to disrupt it or to impress their views on it by repeated interruptions. After their first shout, one immediately sensed the hostility of the audience towards them, and Nehru simply said: "If you think this is a people's war go and ask the people." Thereafter the Communists shut up.

**I think it is a people's war but the leaders and people of India see no proof in thereof in the behaviour of their rulers, and the arrest of Gandhi will certainty not incline them to see it that way.**

## **Many Won't Mind Change Of Masters**

On my travels in India, I spent a night and morning in the same railway compartment with a Bengali Muslim, an officer in the Indian Air Force which is, of course, a British air force. He had volunteered two years ago. I have never heard more violent denunciations of the British than from him. "I am told," I probed, "that the people of Bengal are pro-Japanese." Bengal, with a population of 60,000,000, is the province which the Japanese will probably invade first if they do invade India. "No" replied the airman. "If you pardon me, that is not the correct way of putting it. But we have been slaves so long that many do not mind who their master is."

## **Whole Country...Anti-British**

Practically every Englishman I talked to in India realised that the country had never been as anti-British as it is today. The cause may be manifold and subject to dispute. The fact is indisputable.

## **Problem Not Solved By Maligning Gandhi**

This is the problem—whether we like it or not, and it is not solved by maligning Gandhi in America or imprisoning him in Poona. There was no Gandhi in Burma, yet the civilian population, the British admit, helped the Japanese.

## **What Happened In Burma**

Wavell said to me that in Burma 80 per cent of the population were indifferent to the war, 10 per cent were pro-British and 10 per cent were pro-Japanese. That may be correct. But the 10 per cent who were pro-British fled to India while the 10 per cent who were pro-Japanese stayed to show the Japanese forces shortcuts across difficult terrain, to lead them to British warehouses, to feed them and to create the friendly atmosphere which facilitated the invader's progress.

## **Cripps Failed To Win Indian Support**

Both the Gandhi's Congress and Mohammed Ali Jinnah's Muslim League have publicly resolved not to cooperate with the British in the war effort. Some Muslim leaders might have wished to stand by the Empire but the war is too unpopular in India for them to risk advocating such a policy. In the circumstances the primary

task of the British Government in London and New Delhi should have been to court Indian civilian support. Cripps tried it. But he did not enjoy the collaboration of some key British politicians. In any case he failed

## **British Close Their Minds And Hearts**

Another attempt should have been made. Gandhi and Nehru and other Congress leaders were ready to make far-reaching concessions. The British knew this because they watched Gandhi openly reduce his demands. First he asked the British to go bag and baggage. Later he said they and the United States could keep their armed forces in India and use India as a base for military operations against the Axis. This and similar equally clear developments told the British that agreement with Congress was possible through compromise. But the British seem to have closed their hearts and minds.

## **Dangerous Experiment**

From what many of them said to me I am convinced that they have decided that Gandhi's influence is waning and this is a golden opportunity to break his power. The present is a queer time indeed for such a dangerous experiment.

## **Second Front—Against Gandhi**

Is this to be the second front—the front against Gandhi? Perhaps after their many defeats in the field, the British can actually win a victory over Gandhi. I do not know. He is a tough, shrewd and strong customer and India



is in an ugly mood. But if the British do crush the Gandhi movement what have they achieved ? India will be bitter, sullen and resentful and an easier prey to Japan and Germany. If they crush Gandhi then one of our biggest successes in this war for democracy and freedom will be the smashing of a great world-known movement for democracy and freedom.

## **Officials Don't Care For Indian Cooperation**

British officials in India told me that they did not believe Indian cooperation would be of much avail in case of invasion. That may explain their readiness to strike at Gandhi when they should be preparing to strike at the foreign enemy. But they have made too many mistakes recently in handling military and civilian problems in the East for us to trust their Judgment.

## **Not Too Late**

Can anything be done now ? I think yes. Gandhi is not at all vindictive, He would forgive the British if they released him and he would negotiate with them with a view to supporting the war. Nehru said at a meeting, 'I would fight Japan, sword in hand' But he added, he could only do so as a free man. That is the crux of the situation.

## **Britain Needs Prodding**

It is difficult however to imagine the British suddenly generating the suppleness of policy and the subtlety of brain to alter their course without a potent prod from

the outside. Only the United States could make such a move. Of course Washington can take the position that this is the British Empire's private business. It is admittedly a delicate matter. India is the British Empire. But America has armed forces there and if India becomes a battlefield it will be a serious matter for us whether the ground is solid rock or a soft mire.

Besides—and this is not the least consideration—India is an acid-test of the sincerity of America's purpose in fighting this costly war.

You can, if you wish, say : We are engaged in a difficult war; the Indian nationalists and Gandhi are making trouble for us; therefore down with Gandhi. But that doesn't help you to understand the Indian situation. You have to look at it, **first**, from the Indian's angle of vision.

## **Incomparable Poverty**

India is a miserably poor, hungry, retarded country. Most Indians are half-starved and three-fourths naked. I have known Russia and Eastern Europe in their worst years. They were paradise compared to India today.

The population of India is increasing at the rate of five millions each year. Between 1931 and 1941, according to the British census, the population rose by 50 millions; it is now 393 millions. But the agricultural and industrial output of India does not show anywhere near such a growth.

## **Few Lands**

Although India is 95 percent rural and much of the added population therefore lives in villages, the area under cultivation scarcely varies. It was 229 million acres in 1930-31, 228 million in 1932-33, 232 million in 1933-34, 226 million in 1934-35, 227 million in 1935-36, and 231 million in 1936-37, the last year officially recorded.

Not has the yield per acre risen sharply. Indeed, the yield per acre in wheat, tea, groundnuts, an important Indian crop, and linseed has dropped.

## **Industrial Stagnation**

Of industry, the official Fiscal Commission says: 'The development has not been commensurate within the size of the country, its population, and its natural resources.'

The Indians I spoke to, blamed this on the British Government's policy of deliberately impeding Indian industry, lest it compete with goods made in England.

**The poverty and stagnation of India are the background against which the present crisis must be seen.**

## **With Bombay Journalists**

The Bombay Journalists' Association invited me, to talk to them. I said, I would sit down with them and try to answer their questions.

In response to one question I made a pro-war statement saying, that if the fascists won the war, my world

would be black or dead. A journalist stood up and exclaimed: 'Yes, but for us, Indians, there is no difference between British Fascism and Japanese or German Fascism.'

## **Greater Freedom**

'Now look,' I replied. 'England is not Fascist. It is very democratic, and more democratic today than before the war. I know you do not like the terror and repression in India. But you could not hold a meeting such as this if you were under Japanese or German control.'

'Since my arrival in your country,' I continued, 'almost every third person I meet tells me he has been in jail. I have lived many years in Russia and Germany. In these countries you do not meet people who have been in jail. They are in jail. And many of them are shot.'

## **Why They Don't Bother**

"The British,' another Indian journalist rejoined, 'do not bother shooting us. When a child is born in India it can expect to live 27 years. In England the life expectancy is 55.'

These are correct census data. Of every 100 persons born in India, 45 die before the age of 5. The infant mortality in Bombay is 274 per thousand compared to 66 in London,

## **Vision Obstruction**

Such figures plus real suffering, burn deep resentment, hatred, and disloyalty into the soul of India.

British rule is an Ever Present, unpleasant, close reality to Indians and it often obstructs their vision. They see the world and the war through the thick veil of British domination. That means that they may not see the world and the war at all. They see the British and want to get rid of them.

Indians point to Japan, which started its modern life in 1861 and speedily became a powerful nation. They contend that England has had 150 years to develop India but has not done so.

'We have given India tranquillity and order,' the British argue.

'It is the tranquillity and order of the cemetery', Gandhi said to me.

The British Empire has made no great effort to convert India into a modern, flourishing, mighty country. That would have spelled the end of the British Empire.

## **Profound Dislike**

All subject peoples dislike their rulers. In India the dislike is profound. This old dislike has recently been intensified by a new contempt born of British reverses in Hongkong, Malaya, Singapore and Burma. They shook and shocked India. The sinking of the 'Prince of Wales' and the 'Repulse' made a terrific impression.

## **Colour Sympathy**

In my talks with Indians they often alluded peculiarly enough to the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. It was



The first time they said that a coloured race defeated a white race, and it gave a tremendous fillip, people told me, to the Indian nationalist movement. But that was thirty-seven years ago, before Indian nationalism had matured under Gandhi's influence. It was fought far from India. Hong Kong, Singapore and Burma on the other hand are under the very nose of India and important to its safety. **Indian soldiers fought and died or were captured in those strategic areas.** Out of them 500,000 refugees tracked back to India bringing tales, part true, part exaggerated of British discrimination in favour of white refugees and against Indian refugees. The Axis radio played up these 'atrocities'

## **Prestige Never Lower**

Hostility towards the British rose still higher. British prestige had never been so low. 'Can England defend India' Indians asked, 'or will it be as unsuccessful in holding India as it was in holding the adjacent territories?'

Delight over British defeats mingled with fear of invasion, Indians wished to make a greater contribution to the protection of their country. 'But how could we do so in partnership with our British oppressors?' they argued. 'Shall we fight for democracy in Germany and Japan when we are not a democrat ourselves?'

## **Mere Change Of Masters**

Churchill has explicitly stated that the Atlantic Charter does not apply to India. Many Indians felt that

if Japan conquered India they would merely be exchanging an occupying power they did not know, for an occupying power they had known for 150 years and hated profoundly. Free men who do not understand the emotions of colonial peoples may think this attitude foolish, but it certainly exists.

'If England will not give us independence now when it is in distress.' Indians said to me 'why should we believe it will grant it after the war?'

### **Cripps Bungle**

This was the political climate of India early in 1942. The spirit of Chinese and Russian resistance was (and is) entirely lacking in India. London knew that something had to be done. And quickly Sir Stafford Cripps, new member of the War Cabinet was accordingly rushed out to New Delhi in March, 1942, to negotiate with Indian political parties. Cripps failed. The Congress Party as well as the Muslim League as well as the old Liberals, as well as the ultra-nationalist Hindu Mahasabha, rejected his offer. He had come out to improve a situation. When he failed, the situation deteriorated.

### **Gandhiji's Demand**

That is the genesis of Gandhi's latest civil disobedience movement. Shortly after the collapse of the Cripps' talks, Gandhi announced this 'British must Go' demand. He told me that it came to him suddenly in the night as he lay in his bed under the stars in Sevagram village.

This total and unreasonable demand was a spontaneous, instinctive reaction to the fresh demonstration of British military inferiority in the Far East and to the dashing of many fond hopes aroused by the Cripps' mission.

## **Gandhiji's Concessions**

However, followers and friends argued with Gandhi and convinced him and after a brief period he announced publicly that he had altered his views. Abrupt withdrawal of the Allied troops might result in Japan's occupation of India and China's sure fall.' he wrote in his weekly magazine. Therefore British and American armed forces, Gandhi declared, could stay in India and use India as a base for military operations.

'But Mr. Gandhi' I remarked when he said this to me "armies do not exist in a vacuum, They need smooth running railroads. for instance."

'They could run the railroads' he replied immediately. 'They could police the docks.'

## **Limited Independence**

Gandhi is too wise not to understand that in time of war the military authorities must penetrate into fields that are normally civilian, He knows therefore that Indian independence, if granted today would be only limited independence. Were the British to yield to nationalist pressure and transfer political power to a coalition of Indian parties a great deal of power would still remain



in the hands of the British or be shared by them with their fighting allies. In such circumstances, there could be no chaos.

Gandhi is interested in obtaining the form of independence. Temporarily, he would be satisfied with a minimum of content.

## British Folly

The British Government saw Gandhi openly whittle down his demands. It saw he was conciliatory. It made no move to conciliate him.

In many talks and walks with me, Gandhi elaborated on his plans for the civil disobedience campaign. Once I asked him whether he was dead set on launching this movement of passive resistance to the British or whether somebody might induce him to give it up.

## An Appeal Was Wanting

'You say' I probed, 'that you do not wish to harm China and Russia. Suppose your friends in China and Russia appealed to you not to start the campaign?'

'Let them appeal to me' Gandhi exclaimed. 'I might be dissuaded. If you have access to men in authority you should tell them this.'

'Have I your sanction to say this to the Viceroy?' I asked.

'Yes,' he replied. 'you have my permission. Let them talk to me and I may be converted. I am a reasonable man.'

## Visit To Viceroy

Before my departure from Sevagram village late Mahadev Desai, paunchy, smiling, fifty-year old private secretary of the Mahatma urged me to try and arrange an interview between Gandhi and the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow.

Soon thereafter, I was received by the Viceroy in his great palace at New Delhi. He knew I had just come from a week's stay with Gandhi.

I told him that Gandhi was in a conciliatory mood and not at all intransigent. I sketched the possible outlines of a settlement, basing my statements on Gandhi's own words. I intimated to the Viceroy that it might be helpful if he would discuss these matters with a Congress leader.

## Viceroy Cold

The Viceroy, however, regarded such discussion as a question of high policy which would have to be decided on its merits. He did not invite Gandhi or any other Indian nationalist, and the preparations for the civil disobedience movement consequently took their course.

That was in June, Gandhi nevertheless procrastinated until August. He was waiting and hoping that some leader of the United Nations would mediate between India and England.

He wrote a letter to President Roosevelt. He said to me: 'Tell your president that I wish to be dissuaded.'

## Letter To Chiang

Gandhi was ready, and is ready, to bargain. He wrote to Chiang Kai-Shek. His letter is most revealing. It has not yet been published, but I obtained a copy from a Chinese source,

"My appeal to the British power to withdraw from India," Gandhi informed the Chinese leader, 'is not meant in any shape or form to weaken India's defence against the Japanese or embarrass you in your struggle. India, must not submit to any aggressor or invader, and resist him. I would not be guilty of purchasing the freedom of my country at the cost of your country's freedom. That problem does not arise before me as I am clear that India cannot gain her freedom this way, and a Japanese domination of either India or China would be equally injurious to the other country and to world peace. The domination must therefore be prevented, and I should like India to play her natural and rightful role in this. I feel that India cannot do this while she is in bondage.'

In the third week of August Indian workingmen demanded the release of Gandhi and went on strike at the Tata munitions works, which embrace the biggest steel mill in the British Empire. This has not been reported by the press anywhere. (It was later announced in the Assembly that the strike had ended—Ed. J. P. G.)

.....Riots and sabotage throughout India are on a much larger scale than the British government in India

had anticipated, the semi-official daily, 'Statesman' of New Delhi admits.

The Civil Disobedience Movement, Indian nationalist circles in India believe, is only starting.....

## **Jinnah Falsified**

Mohammed Ali Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, told me recently in Bombay that if the Indian National Congress launched a civil disobedience movement, there would be violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims. No such events have been reported. The fact is that almost all Indians desire their country's independence, and no Indian party or leader dare to interfere with an attempt to bring it about. Congress leaders in India declare that many Sikhs, Communists, and Muslims are supporting the civil disobedience movement.....

## **Rulers' Spirit**

The British inside and outside India are adamant in their refusal to negotiate with the Indian national movement. They want to crush the civil disobedience campaign. They say any readiness on their part to conciliate India would undermine still farther British prestige, already so seriously weakened by the military reverses in Hongkong, Malaya, Singapore, and Burma. But will it not be much worse for the British to have to climb down a month or six weeks from now in case the disorders grow ?

The British close their minds to this gloomy eventuality and plead for time to suppress the Indian trouble. The difficulty is that even if the British succeed they fail.

## **Is It Victory ?**

Suppose shootings and whippings cow the Indian people for another interval of uneasy quiet? What the United Nations need is the active support of India's population.

## **The Morat**

Gandhi's letter to Chiang not only shows that he is anti-Japanes. It shows that he deeply comprehends why he, as an Indian nationalist, must be anti-Japanese and pro-Chinese. But as an Indian nationalist he is so anti-British. Remove the cause of his anti-British sentiment, and he and millions of followers will become actively anti-Japanese and pro-Chinese.

Paranthetically it should be stated that Gandhi despite his pacificism recruited soldiers for the British army in the last world war. (He thought the reward would be Indian Independence.) He might again support a war.

## **C. D. Abortive ?**

That is the position. Instead of talking to Gandhi, the British arrest him. Now reports come from India that the riots and disorders are being quelled. This probably creates the impression that Gandhi's civil disobedience movement is abortive. But Gandhi never

wanted riots and disorders. He warned against them. He asked for closing of stores, abstention from work, refusal to pay taxes, private manufacture of salt and, in general non-co-operation. On this we have few reports.

It is too early to judge. One thing is certain, the imprisonment of Gandhiji, Nehru, and the other Indian leaders, and the civil disobedience campaign will not make Indians more pro-British or more pro-war.

## **Problem For Allies**

But that is our problem. It is an urgent war problem for all the United Nations which are now faced with a serious military situation throughout the Middle East.

In the vast area between the Caucasus, Cairo, and Calcutta, an ordeal awaits us. India is the strategic and spiritual pivot of that region.

## **Roosevelt Must Act**

Somebody must act informally, courageously, and quickly. This only such somebody is President Roosevelt. He must simply bring the British Government to a point where it will talk to Gandhi.....

Gandhi could talk in prison. He doesn't mind. He has done it before. He is very religious and he forgives.

They could get it. Throughout India the word I heard most often used to describe Indian sentiment at the present juncture was 'frustration' I heard it from



Congress leaders, from Indian industrialists, from teachers, students and soldiers. Frustration results from a difference between one's desire to act and one's ability to act.

## **Fight For Defence**

The Indians would like to defend their country. But they cannot do so as partners of their British masters. The Cripps negotiations are revealed by official statements to have been a struggle, between Indians demanding greater participation in India's defence and Cripps who opposed it. If Indians were free to fight this war, there would be an end to frustration and an upsurge of joy and an outburst of energy which would be assets to United Nations.

## **China Worried**

The Chinese are supremely worried by England's attitude, India is the only channel through which Anglo-American supplies can reach China. Moreover, knowing the East, the Chinese understand how disastrous the suppression of a great Asiatic independence movement would be to the morale of anti-Axis Asia. China is therefore pressing for mediation by the United Nations.

## **Complete Sympathy**

It is interesting to observe how various nations react to the Indian crisis. The Chinese, as Asiatics who have themselves fought to throw off foreign yokes, can easily put themselves in the skin of Indians; their

sympathy with Indian independence and with Indians in their present predicament is complete.

## **American Fears**

Americans intuitively respond in favour of the freedom of colonial nations. But the fear that Indian behaviour may prejudice the conduct of the war has somewhat adulterated the natural reaction of Americans to Indian's struggle for release from imperial domination. At present, former (?) instincts are gaining the upper hand again, especially since many persons in this country feel that the British should not have rejected Gandhi's conciliatory request for talks.

The mail of Senators and Representatives in Washington is heavy with complaints about British intransigence in India.

## **The Danger**

The danger is that the Indian issue will be exploited by professional Anglophobes, appeasers in pro-war clothes and American friends of the Axis. This must be prevented.

I criticise England's attitude in india because I am a friend of England, and hope it will be saved from its own stupidity. There can be no objection to private expression of American opinion about India, but any resolution in the Senate or House of Representatives would probably irritate the British Government without advancing the cause of India. If there is to be American official intervention, it must be discreet and informal.



## Why Not Pull Up ?

For the moment, however, the United States Government is deferring to British obstinacy and refraining from extending its good offices to adjust the Indian quarrel. Such delicate handling of a delicate situation is diplomatic and polite, It may prolong the war for several year and lead us into disaster. It should be possible to give a friend a strong scolding without endangering the friendship.

## Administration Worried !

The British know that Washington would like to do something, but is not sure that Anglo-American relations could bear the strain. India is, in fact, our business, and the Administration is worried about India. But we hold our hand out of consideration for Britain's Imperial sensibilities. This is an unhealthy state of affairs which should cause concern to London.

The British think of India in terms of the maintenance of their 'face' and authority. They contend, of course, that to maintain their authority in India by crushing the current civil disobedience movement is to consolidate the defence of India. I think the reverse is the case.

In India, after a while, I sighed aloud for a person whose statements to me on the Indian situation would not be contradicted by the next person I met. On one question, however, there was complete unanimity. : on the primary reason for the failure of the Cripps mission. Yet this reason has apparently remained a secret out-

side of India, and Sir Stafford Cripps himself contrived to avoid any mention of it in an article about his mission published in the *New York Times* of August 23, 1942.

Englishmen and Indians in India agreed that the Cripps negotiations broke down when Cripps withdrew a promise he had made the Indian leaders that India could have an immediate National Government.

### **Maulana's Charge**

On April 11, 1942, two days after the negotiations broke down, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, President of the Indian National Congress Party, who had been conducting the talks with Cripps, wrote Cripps a letter in which he recapitulated the course of the negotiations.

"What we were told in our very first talk with you," Azad stated, "is now denied or explained away. You told me then that there would be a National Government which would function as a Cabinet and that the position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the King in England vis-a-vis his Cabinet. In regard to the India Office (headed by Leopold S. Amery in London) you told me that you were surprised that no one had so far mentioned this important matter, and that the practical course was to have this attached or incorporated with the Dominions' Office. The whole of this picture which you sketched before us has now been completely shattered by what you told us during our last interview."

## Cripps Cryptic

How did Cripps reply to this charge that he had reversed himself? At the end of his letter, Azad asked Cripps' permission to publish this and other correspondence. Cripps' reply, dated April 11, was a four-line letter which read:

**My dear Maulana Sahib:—**Thank you for your letter which I have just received in reply to mine of the 10th April I have no objection to your releasing the Congress resolution and our correspondence whenever you desire to do so.

**Yours Sincerely,**

**Stafford Cripps.**

If Azad had lied or distorted Cripps's promise, would it not have been natural and imperative for Cripps to say: 'You may print my letter but I insist that I never promised you a National Government free from the Viceroy's veto? Cripps made no such denial. He has never denied Azad's assertion. The correspondence between him and the Congress leaders was accordingly published by Congress in an unbound pamphlet which lies before me.

## Corroboration

I had the following conversation in New Delhi with the British official to whom Cripps reported late every evening during his negotiations with the Indians:

'I did what I could', the official said, 'to draft a formula for Defence. But then they reverted to the

question of the Viceroy's rights in relation to the Indian members of the government.'

'Is that the issue on which the negotiations broke?' I asked.

'Yes, quite definitely.' the official replied.

Azad, Nehru and Rajagopalachari negotiated with Cripps on behalf of Congress. Each one of them separately gave me an account of the negotiations which coincided with the version of this British official. On June 1, 1942, the New Delhi newspapers quoted a declaration by Rajagopalachari to the effect that Cripps suddenly left India in a hurry, after it had become clear that a satisfactory Defence formula could be found but when differences had arisen regarding the relations between the Viceroy and the proposed National Government.

## **Unauthorised Offer ?**

I said to a very high British military man in India, 'Azad, Nehru and Rajagopalachari have told me that Cripps offered them a National Government not subject to the Viceroy's veto. They have put that in writing. I do not think they would lie and attribute to Cripps statements he never made.'

The military man said : 'If Cripps promised any such thing he did so without the authority of the British Government.'

## Who Was Behind It ?

"There is a story," I proceeded, 'that after Cripps discussed the National Government with the Indians the Viceroy and General Wavell protested to London against it, or London disapproved on its own, at any rate, Cripps was then instructed to withdraw his proposal, and he informed the Indians that they would have to discuss the nature of the government with the Viceroy.'

'The fact is,' the General replied, 'that Sir Stafford did not have the authority to propose a National Government with responsibility.'

The General carefully did not deny that Cripps had made such a Proposal. In effect, he confirmed it.

## Documentary Proof

Although Sir Stafford Cripps does not mention this essential cause of his failure in India, and instead blames the collapse of his mission on Congress and on the Hindu-Muslim difference, the British Government and the United States Government possess documents and reports which prove that Cripps failed because he promised India a responsible Cabinet Government at the beginning of his negotiations and then withdrew that promise.

I have heard many people argue that it is impossible to give India its own Government now, because you cannot make such a big change in war time. The answer is that, this is just what Cripps offered to do when he arrived in India.



## Statesman's Exposure

The Calcutta 'Statesman', British-owned and an occasional mouthpiece of the British authorities commented angrily, on April 12, 1942 on the breakdown of the Cripps talks. 'It would be easy to blame Congress and the other parties for the failure,' it wrote. 'But the blame lies with the India Office and the official section of the Government of India.' The paper declares unequivocally that the breakdown is over the interim proposals about the immediate war-time settlement.'

'The question therefore to be answered,' the editorial continues, is, 'was Sir Stafford Cripps empowered to offer a real National Government or not?.....writing on this subject when he announced the proposals, we interpreted them as meaning that he was.....We held that the Cripps school in the British Cabinet had won... It seemed to us that what was proposed was Dominion Status in action now, but that the Diehards were determined to pretend that it was not. Success, we wrote, would elude Sir Stafford unless he was empowered to use very different language, accompanied by striking changes that would make it clear that the old regime is ended, and new men and new methods are at work.'

## Cripps Made A Dupe

Sir Stafford Cripps was not empowered to use such language. Unfortunately as the discussions proceeded he was compelled to make it clear that our interpretation was wrong.....The India Office, 'this undesirable relic

of a past age', is to remain and with it the whole theory that the Government of India is responsible not to India but to the Parliament of Great Britain.....How can they know anything about governing India? How can they be anything but an incompetent and unpopular authority in a war.....Sir Stafford has been made a dupe.....We regret greatly the announcement of Sir Stafford's immediate departure. If the Diehard object is that he should return discredited, that will not be achieved. Events can only bring discredit on the reactionaries.

Professor Reginald Coupland of Oxford University a member of Cripps's staff in India, published a little book several weeks ago entitled 'The Cripps's Mission.' In it he writes, 'The decisive factor as has been seen, was the clash between Congress and the British views as to the character of the proposed National Government.' The Indians wanted a real Government. 'Cripps had agreed. But subsequently 'British views' prevailed, and Cripps changed his tone and told Congress leaders the matter was no longer in his hands and they would have to discuss it the with the Viceroy.

## Behind Scenes

Something had happened behind the scenes. As one American General who was in New Delhi during the Cripps negotiations said to me, 'Cripps was bitched in the back.'

If Sir Stafford Cripps had been able to stick to his promise a settlement of the immediate Indian problem

could have been reached to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. There would have been no Hindu-Muslim dispute. If Britain had said: 'Here is a real Indian National Government,' it would have been politically impossible for President Jinnah of the Muslim League or anybody else to refuse and say: 'No I do not wish to help govern my country, which now at last, is free.'

## **When Jinnah Would Have Been Cornered**

**Jinnah could no more have turned down an offer to enter an Indian National Government than Wendell Wilkie would refuse to help in the war effort if he were asked. This is the real answer to all spurious arguments about Muslim-Hindu differences and to assertions that the establishment of an Indian Government now would let loose a civil war.**

I asked Nawabzada Liquat Ali Khan, the Secretary of the Muslim League (a Nawabzada is the son of a Nawab, and Nawab is a titled big landlord), whether the Muslims would join a real National Government. He said: 'Yes, if Pakistan (a separate Muslim dominion) were granted. Then as a result of such collaboration we might decide, we did not want to divide India.'

## **Jinnah On Earth**

On August 17 the New York 'Times' reported a statement made by Jinnah in Bombay. After much rich verbiage about what terrible things he would do if the British reached an agreement with Congress and the Hindus, he came down to earth and said 'repeatedly'

according to the dispatch, that he was ready to form a provisional Government of India. 'Naturally,' he added 'it would be necessary to obtain the support of all groups including the Congress.

## **It All Depends !**

This is Direct enough. It means that Jinnah would co-operate with Congress inside a National Government. Of course, since then Jinnah has seen the Viceroy and may have decided to become more intransigent. But I carried out of India the definite conviction that if the British wished, they could have a working unity in India within twenty-four hours.

## **He Failed in Spite of His Smiles**

I feel sure that Sir Stafford Cripps went out to India with the best intentions and the profoundest wish to succeed. Hongkong, Malaya, and Singapore had fallen. On March 7, Rangoon, the key to Burma, was captured by Japan. There was depression and even panic in some British circles. Everybody realised that the military defences of India were weak and that India could never be held unless far-reaching concessions to the nation's desire for independence enlisted its 400,000,000 in the fight against Japan. Cripps, new member of the British War Cabinet, patriotically and courageously undertook the difficult task.

## **Draft Declaration**

Cripps carried to India the British Government's draft of a declaration it would be prepared to make if

the Indian parties approved the text. 'Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities,' the proposed declaration began, 'steps shall be taken to set up in India, in a manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.'

Article B provided that the native Indian States, ruled by princes and Maharajas, would participate in the constitution-making body.

Article C read: His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to (1) the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides....

These 'non-acceding' provinces could unite and draft their own constitution if they wished. The British Government would then give them 'the same full status as the Indian Union.'

Article D stated that 'unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of Hostilities,' the constitution-making body would be composed as follows:

After the war elections would take place for new provincial legislatures in British India. The lower houses of these provincial legislatures would then meet as a single electoral college and elect the constitution-making body by a system of proportional representation. The



delegates from the native Indian States would be appointed by the princes in proportion to population.

## **Interim Control**

So far, the draft declaration, Cripps brought to India, dealt with the post-war future. The last article, Article E, asserted that 'during the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed.' His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for interim control and direction of the defence of India. However, His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations.'

## **Rejected In Toto**

This was the Cripps offer. Within a few days of its publication on March 29 all important Indian parties, groups, and leaders—including the Congress, the Muslim League, the Sikhs, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Untouchables—had rejected it. In his first interview with the Indian press on March 29, Cripps explained that 'the scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole,' and since each party disliked a different part of the scheme, all turned it down.

In that March 29 interview, Cripps explained that there was a difference between 'termination of the war' and the 'cessation of hostilities'. There might be one or two years between the cessation of hostilities and the

end of the war' 'After the cessation of hostilities,' he said, 'there would be elections to the provincial legislatures and these would then elect the consitutional assembly, which would then tackle the slow job of drafting the constitution. The new scheme might not go into effect, Indians feared, until about five years after the war.'

But that was not their chief objection. The Congress party contended that if the autocratic princes, who are under British protection, appointed almost one-third of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, the British Government, which might also exercise some influence over other delegates, would be in a position to control or delay the drafting of the Constitution.

The Congress, furthermore, felt that the right which declaration gave to any province not to enter the Union amounted to the vivisection of India, which, Gandhi said, was 'a sin'. India they maintain, is geographically a compact unit; despite its much-advertised 222 languages and 200 races, it possess great linguistic racial homogeneity.

Gandhi admits that it would be impossible to keep the Moslems in an Indian Union if they really wanted to secede. But as Nehru and Azad put it to me in a triangular interview at Wardha, they object to divorce before marriage. 'If after ten or fifteen years trial,' Nehru said, 'the Moslems or anybody else wished to secede from the Indian Union, no one could stop them. But to give them the right of secession at the very start would mean that they would never go in.' And many Moslems would resent that.

## **Jinnah's Fears**

While welcoming Cripps's offer of Dominion Status, which Cripps said, included India's right to vote itself out of the British Commonwealth, Congress rejected Cripps's offer of a post war settlement chiefly on the secession issue. The Muslim League, on the other hand, welcomed the right of secession and saw in it a theoretical recognition of a separate Moslem State—Pakistan. Jinnah, however, was afraid that in practice he would not get Pakistan because not enough Moslems wanted it. So he too rejected the Cripps's offer.

## **Case of Sikhs**

The Sikhs, a compact warrior community of six million non-Moslems inhabiting the predominantly Moslem Punjab, feared that Pakistan would take the Punjab out of India and thus lamentably betray the cause of the Sikhs. They informed Sir Stafford that they would resist by all possible means the separation of the Punjab from the All India Union.

The Hindu Mahasabha rejected the offer because it gave too much to the Moslems, and the Untouchables because it gave too much to the Hindus.

## **Offer Was Inept**

These responses to the Cripps proposals prove, not that the Indian situation is hopelessly complicated, but that the offer was inept. The fundamental blunder was that the offer concerned itself almost entirely with the future. But Indians are much

**less interested in the post-war future than in the immediate present.**

Congress, rejecting Cripps's offer, stated that 'in today's grave crisis, it is the present that counts, and even proposals for the future are important in so far as they affect the present.'

Promises about the 'uncertain future' gave Congress no comfort, especially since they were accompanied by provisions and restrictions as a result of which real freedom may well become an illusion.'

## **Congress Offer**

The Congress Working Committee accordingly adopted its resolution rejecting the Cripps offer, and President Azad brought it to Cripps, but then they both agreed not to publish it and to proceed with their negotiations about the interim settlement for the war.

'All these provisions for the future', a Congress statement handed to Cripps on April 8 declared, 'need not come in the way of a present arrangement. As controversial matter, this might be left out of any proposed declaration at this stage. It will be open to any group or party to adhere to its own opinions in regard to them and yet cooperate in a settlement for present action.'

## **The Immediate Issue**

Realising that this was the only procedure possible, Cripps concentrated on the negotiations regarding the

participation of Indians in the war effort. Congress was the only Indian party with which he conducted these negotiations about Defence, for he knew the importance of Congress.

## Ready For Cooperation

Despite Congress doubts of the sincerity and wisdom of the British Cabinet's scheme for the future, it was ready to cooperate in the present.

"The over-riding problem before all of us, and more especially before Indians, is the defence of the country from aggression and invasion. President Azad wrote to Cripps on April 10. The future, important as it is," he continued, "will depend on what happens in the next few months and years."

It was to these questions of the present that Congress and Cripps addressed themselves very soon after Cripps arrived in India. Cripps had promised the Congress leaders a real National Government. But since the power of such a Government would depend on the extent to which it participated in defence activities, this subject was the first to be discussed in detail. Difficulties appeared immediately. In talking of the post-war future Cripps was free from the inhibition of practical considerations. But in implementing Article E during the war he had to consult with the Viceroy and General Wavell.

On March 30 Cripps wrote a letter to President Azad which began: "I had the opportunity of a short talk with H. E. the Viceroy, last night, during which he



discussed with me his views as to the implementation of clause E of the draft declaration."

This had an ominous ring. The rest of the letter bears that out. 'The Viceroy', Cripps went on, 'would be prepared to consult with Indian leaders on this basis to see whether it were possible to designate an Indian to some office connected with the Government of India's defence responsibilities without in any way impinging upon the functions and duties of the commander-in-Chief.

This was offensively vague. Apparently matters were being taken out of Cripps's hands. On April 1 Cripps wrote another letter to Azad suggesting that he and Nehru meet with General Wavell.

Meanwhile Cripps had decided to go back to England on April 6 but on April 2 he told his Press Conference that he had postponed his departure for a few days.

## **Cripps Denial**

On the same occasion he denied that he had been faced with the resignation of three British generals if he agreed to the demand for an Indian as Defence Member of the Government. He likewise categorically denied the report that the Viceroy was raising difficulties.

The 'Hindustan Times' of April 3 declared editorially that, "Sir Stafford Cripps's decision to postpone his departure by a few days will be heartily welcomed in this country.' The Hindustan Times' is edited by Devadas

Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's son, and financed by G. Birla a rich Indian capitalist at whose home in New Delhi the Congress Working Committee set permanently during the Cripps negotiations. 'No one who has the interests of the country at heart' the 'Hindustan Times' continued "wants to wreck Sir Stafford Cripps's Mission."

## **Complete Fiasco**

General Wavell, General Sir Alan Hartly, and Major General Molesworth, Deputy Chief of Staff of the British army in India, met Azad and Nehru in Wavell's house on April 4 for half an hour. Four of the participants in that interview have described it to me; it was a complete fiasco.

Cripps wired London. The fruit of these and other consultations was the plan submitted by Cripps to Congress in a letter dated April 7. It proposed that 'an Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's executives': this Indian would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organizationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department. These sections were specified in an 'Annexure.'

## **Laughable Proposals**

What were those sections which would be taken away from Wavell and handed to a representative Indian? They were 'public relations', 'demobilization' and postwar reconstruction, the distribution of petrol, 'amenities' for the troops, all canteen organizations, 'certain non-technical

educational institutions', 'stationery printing and forms for the army, the reception of foreign missions, evacuation of civilians from threatened areas, economic warfare, and signals co-ordination.

The Indians laughed. "They were ready to trust us with canteens and the printing of stationery." a well-known Indian leader scoffed. The Congress Working Committee denounced this defence formula as 'totally insufficient.'

## ENTER JOHNSON

### Search For New Defence Formula

Again the threat of a breakdown. At this stage Colonel Louis Johnson, who had just arrived in India as President Roosevelt's personal representative, entered upon the scene on the invitation of Sir Stafford Cripps and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Louis Johnson conferred with the Viceroy, Wavell, Cripps and Nehru. He finally, and perhaps after consulting the White House evolved a second formula by which the Defence Department shall be placed in charge of a representative Indian Member with the exception of functions to be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief as War Member of the Executive Council. A War Department will be constituted which will take over such functions of the Defence Department as are not retained by the defence member. A list of all the retained functions has been agreed.

## Congress Formula

When the Congress Working Committee received this formula it amended slightly to read as follows :—

The Defence Department shall be placed in the charge of a representative Indian member, but certain functions relating to the conduct of the war will be exercised, **for the duration of war by the Commander-in-Chief**, who will be in control of the war activities of the armed forces in India, and who will be an **extraordinary** member of the National Cabinet for that purpose.

A war Department will be constituted under the Commander-in-Chief. This Department will take over such functions as are to be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief. A list of such functions has been prepared and is attached. The Defence Member shall be in charge of all other matters relating to defence, including those now dealt with by the Defence Co-ordination Department.

With this formula the Congress Working Committee sent along a letter stating that in view of the war and the obvious necessity of allowing full scope for war operations to the Commander-in-Chief functions relating to the conduct of the war are delegated to him and are to be exercised by him for the duration of the war. He will, in effect, have full control of the operations and of the war activities of the armed forces in India.

## Cripps's Changes

On April 8 Cripps introduced a few changes in this formula and delivered it to the Working Committee. Cripps's formula read :

The Defence Department shall be placed in the charge of a representative Indian member, but certain functions relating to the conduct of the war will be exercised, **until the new constitution comes into operation, by the Commander-in-Chief**, who will be in control of the armed forces in India, and who will be a member of the Executive Council for that purpose.

A War Department will be constituted under the Commander-in-Chief. This department will take over such functions as are to be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief. A list of such functions has been prepared and is attached.

The Defence Member shall be in charge of all other matters relating to defence in the Defence Department and those now dealt with by the Defence co-ordination Department **in addition to other important matters closely related to defence.**

In the event of any new functions failing to be discharged in relation to defence or any dispute arising as to the allocation of any old functions it shall be decided by Majesty's Government.

## The Difference

It will be seen that the two formulae were very close. Whereas the Congress formula provided that



the Commander-in-Chief would exercise his functions 'for the duration of the war', Cripps made it 'until the new constitution comes into operation.' The Congress formula called the Commander-in-Chief 'an extraordinary member of the National Cabinet', whereas Cripps called him 'a member of the (Viceroy's) Executive Council.'

## **Note Of Optimism**

It will be noted, however, that Cripps attached no lists of functions. And everything depended on the lists. Despite this lapse, the general atmosphere at New Delhi improved, and it appeared that a settlement was near. In fact press reports went out to America and other countries that a settlement had been reached. Indians and foreigners in New Delhi were optimistic.

## **The Break**

At lunch time on April 9, Colonel Louis Johnson helped to arrange an appointment for Azad and Nehru with Cripps at five-thirty that afternoon. It was expected that Cripps would be able to announce to them an agreement on the Defence formula. Instead he informed them in a brief interview that India could not have a National Government and that he was going home. This was the break.

## **Defeated By Enemies**

What had happened ?

While in India, Cripps told members of his staff and non-Englishmen too that before he left England he

had asked Winston Churchill to remove the Viceroy from office. He had apparently anticipated trouble from the Viceroy. Churchill, according to Cripps, replied that such a step would be inconvenient, and that the Viceroy would not interfere with the negotiations, although Wavell did have the final word on Defence question. Cripps maintained, however, that he had full authority to set up real Cabinet Government in India.

On April (?) this authority was specifically withdrawn in new instructions to Cripps cabled from London. Cripps was told therein that he could not go beyond the text of the British Government's draft declaration unless he obtained the consent of the Viceroy and Mission. The same evening Cripps said that his enemies had defeated him.

## **Roosevelt's Request**

Cripps packed his bags. However, one more effort was made to retrieve the situation. Throughout the month of February, 1942, watching Japan advance in the Far East, President Roosevelt had taken a lively interest in the Indian question, and when the British Cabinet finally decided, to send the Cripps Mission to India, the White House dispatched to Churchill a proposal for the solution of the Indian problem. President Roosevelt followed every step of the Cripps negotiation, and when the break came on April 9 he tried to persuade Churchill to keep Cripps in India and resume the talks. But Cripps did not stay.

## Azad's Solemn Words

On April 10, before Cripps's departure, President Azad wrote Cripps a solemn letter. The Congress Party, he said, was 'prepared to co-operate without any assurance for this uncertain future' after the war. But Article E regarding the immediate war effort was vague. 'When this vagueness was pointed out,' Azad wrote, 'you said that this was deliberate so as to give you freedom to determine these changes in consultation with others. In our talks you gave us to understand that you envisaged a National Government which would deal with all matters except Defence.' 'But' Azad argued 'the chief functions for a National Government must necessarily be to organize Defence both intensively and on the widest popular basis and to create a mass psychology of resistance to an invader. Popular resistance must have a national background, and both the soldier and the civilian must feel that they are fighting for their country's freedom under national leadership.'

## Conciliatory Stand

"Congress had been conciliatory," Azad contended. "With a view to arriving at a settlement, we were prepared to accept certain limitations on the normal powers of the Defence Minister. We had no desire to upset in the middle of the war the present military organization or arrangements. We accepted also that the higher strategy of the war should be controlled by the war Cabinet in London which would have an Indian member. The immediate object before us was to make the defence of

India more effective, to strengthen it, to broad base it on the popular will, and to reduce all red tape delay, and inefficiency from it. There was no question of our interfering with the technical and operational sides. One thing of course was of paramount importance to us—India's safety and defence. Subject to this primary consideration, there was no reason why there should be any difficulty in finding a way out of the present impasse in accordance with the unanimous desire of the Indian people, for in this matter there are no differences amongst us.

### **The Husk They Offered**

It is clear from the negotiations on the Defence formula that the Indians wished to do more for the Defence of their country than the British were ready to allow them to do. Gandhi's pacifism did not enter into it. Azad, Nehru, Rajagopalachari, and other Congress leaders are not pacifists, and Gandhi knows it. They wanted to fight the war. Instead, they were told they could run the canteens, print forms, and economic warfare!

### **Cripps Twists**

Cripps replied to Azad on April 11 stating that 'Indians would be in charge of internal order, police, war finance, railways, supplies for all the forces, ammunitions, propaganda, A. R. P. and labour. But nothing further could have been done by way of giving responsibility for Defence Services to representative Indian members... This defence is, as you know, a paramount duty and responsibility of His Majesty's Government...

'The real substance of your refusal to take part in a National Government,' he said, 'is that the form of Government suggested is not such as would enable to rally the Indian people as you desire.' Cripps argued that a Cabinet Government would require constitutional changes which are impossible in war time and that such a Cabinet nominated presumably by the major political organizations, would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed, and would, in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority."

### Imperious Note

Cripps was thus introducing the Hindu-Muslim issue into the negotiations. This issue had never previously been discussed in the talks on the immediate war-time arrangements, and it did not have to be discussed.

As Cripps himself said, the Cabinet Government would consist of persons nominated by 'the major political organizations,' in other words, Congress and the Muslim League, and if this constituted an absolute dictatorship of the majority, that is, the Hindu majority, how could you ever get any Indian government in India?

For the Hindus are the majority in India, a majority of three Hindus to one Muslim. Cripps was in fact saying that India could never be free and united. He was in fact implying that India had to be divided. This is the logical conclusion of what he and many British imperialists have been saying in recent months.



## Short Memory

Cripps's other objection was that there could be no Indian National Government without far-reaching constitutional changes which would have to be voted by the British Parliament in London. He suggested that as a substitute an Indianised Viceroy's Executive Council. But in his first press interview in New Delhi on march 29 Cripps was quoted by the entire Press of India as saying that a good deal could be done by changing the conventions or adopting new ones—he particularly mentioned that the Executive Council could become a Cabinet.'

## Could Have Been Done

Professor Reginald Coupland, who went out to India in the autumn of 1941 to study its constitutional problems and then joined the Cripps mission, writes in his book on the mission, that the Viceroy alone could determine the composition of a Council with which he would have to work. But it was generally believed that the Viceroy was willing to consider an all Indian Council, with himself and the British Commander-in-Chief as member. Even this, Coupland states, would require an act of Parliament. But the Viceroy, he continues, is specifically entitled by the act ( of India, 1933.), to dissent from the majority opinion of his Council.'

To meet the constitutional difficulty, some British and Indian moderates suggested and Congress leaders also took the position, that the Viceroy might, if he could be prevailed upon to do so enter into a gentleman's agreement not to exercise his veto. Professor Coupland,

however, declares that such an undertaking not to use the over-riding power would be a breach of the law.

## **Senseless Escape**

When Cripps encountered difficulties in the setting up of a National Government he tried to convince the Congress that 'ultimately there was always the possibility of the members of the Executive Council resigning or threatening to resign if they disagreed with the Viceroy.' Congress felt that this was an unhealthy and impossible arrangement on which to conduct serious war-time business. If the party representative resigned owing to disagreement with the Viceroy, that would be the end of the scheme that Cripps brought to India, and then the Viceroy could appoint a new Executive Council consisting of his own Indian puppets.

## **"Irremovable" Bunkum**

It has been argued that such a Cabinet would be irremovable. That is correct. But by whom is the Viceroy's Executive Council removable? Not by the Indian people or any Indian party! Is Churchill removable? In principle, yes: in fact, it would be very difficult. Every majority is irksome to the minority.

## **Will Is not There !**

The realistic answer to all the constitutional quibbling is this; as Gandhi and everybody else in India agree, the British armed forces and the American armed forces must stay in India to fight this war. If the British allowed an Indian Government to be set up in these circumstances, that Government would not exercise

complete power. The British would retain a great deal of power, and certainly enough to prevent chaos or a separate peace.

**The best time for the British to begin the transfer of power to the Indians is in war time when so much of the physical control of the country remains in British hands. But the British do not see it that way, it is not a matter of legalisms; the will is not there.**

The Cripps mission, accordingly, boils down to this; Sir Stafford offered the Indians a post-war settlement which they all rejected. For the war, he offered them participation in a Viceroy's Council similar in power to the Council which already existed and in which the Viceroy's voice was stronger than that of its Indian membership. He offered them very limited tasks, such as canteens, etc. in the defence of their country. Congress would have none of it because it was convinced that on this basis the enthusiasm and cooperation of the Indian masses for the war could not be enlisted.

*If this is all that Sir Stafford Cripps carried to India, why did he go at all ?*

I think that Sir Stafford had two hopes.

**First**, that his old friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru and his record as an exponent of Indian freedom would prevail over all practical difficulties.

**Second**, that the gravity of Britain's military position in the Far East would play the reactionary imperialists loose from their traditional intransigent attitude towards Indian freedom and enable him to go beyond the text of his offer.

So he told the Congress leaders that they would have a real National Government not subject to the Viceroy's veto.

He told the Princes that after the war England would surely get out of India and that they would have to trim their royal sails to the wind of freedom.

He told a deputation of businessmen in India, which included R. W. Haddow, President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, Sir J. H. Richardson, leader of the European Group in the Central Legislative Assembly and C. P. Lawson, Chairman of the European Association, that their long sway in India was done and that in the future free India they would not enjoy special privileges.

These British businessmen protested to British officials in New Delhi and, by cable, to Winston Churchill.

The princes likewise stormed.

British officials in India and elsewhere refused to countenance a real Indian National Government.

All these forces pulled wires and brought their influence to bear against Sir Stafford's success.

Cripps knows this better than I do.

*Then how explain Cripps's behaviour after the collapse of his mission to India ?*

Cripps's article in the 'New York Times' of August 23, 1942, contains innumerable statements which are demonstrably misleading. It, like the other recent utterances by Cripps, repeats many of the ancient Imperialist arguments which Cripps castigated in his non-official past. Cripps, for instance, now stressed the

difficulties created by the Muslim League's opposition. But when he returned from his non-official visit to India in 1940 he wrote (See 'Stafford Cripps Prophetic Rebel' by Eric Estorick):—

“The controllers of the Muslim League are drawn almost entirely from the professional, landlord, or industrial class of well-to-do muslim masses . . . They would like to see the return of the Muslim domination in India but as this is impossible they have regarded the continuation of British rule on the whole the lesser of two evil alternatives. The other is the Government of India by peasants and workers through adult suffrage and a democratic Indian constitution. They fear this latter alternative even more than they dislike British rule. It is for this reason that they have refused to support the demands of Congress . . . We must ask ourselves whether the 250 million Hindus are to be denied self-government because 80 million Muslims either are afraid of it or put forward an impractical suggestion for the division of India . . . In truth, if the 80 million Muslims were left to make their own political decision without any injection of communal animosity, the great majority of them would support the Congress Party's programme. In fact, many of them do today . . . The attitude that is being adopted today by the British Government is that they can and will do nothing further until the Hindus and the Muslims settle their differences. This gives the reactionary leaders of the Muslim League the power to prevent the people of India getting self-government almost indefinitely. It is this attitude that the British Government is in fact encouraging whether consciously or unconsciously.

### **Saddest Tragedy**

Where is the fine, humane Stafford who wrote those words in 1940 ? He is in the British Government and doing the same wrong to India which he then charged against the British Government. For me this is the saddest phase of the entire Cripps' Mission. If Cripps had failed and remained



the old Cripps, the tragedy would have been much smaller than it is.

I do not know what happened inside the heart and mind of Cripps. I can easily imagine the torment through which he passed. What alternatives were open to him after his failure in India? He might have resigned and attacked the Churchill Government.

That is a difficult decision to take in war time.

Churchill would undoubtedly have won the battle.

Cripps would have been branded a dangerous non-conformist who would not submit to discipline in the Labour party and who now breaks discipline as a member of the British War Cabinet.

He would have been called a bad soldier and a bad loser.

It would have been said that he went beyond his written instructions.

His immediate usefulness might have been destroyed.

His official career might have been cut short—at least for a time.

He apparently preferred to stay inside to toe the line.

I believe deeply that by doing so he harmed himself and his country.

He was the possible alternative to Churchill and the hope of England. He may still be—perhaps this is the star that guided him his action. India diminished his chances. But one might understand what he did without justifying it—if he had at least kept quiet and refrained from adopting all the threadbare, obsolete phrases about India which his Diehard colleagues have been using for decades.

What a Victory they must be celebrating!

## FACTORS WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT CRIPPS FAILURE

(1) Responses to the Cripps' proposals prove, not that the Indian situation is hopelessly complicated, but that the offer was inept.

(2) Despite Congress doubts of the sincerity and wisdom of the British Cabinet's scheme for the future, it was ready to cooperate in the present.

(3) Cripps had promised the Congress leaders a real National Government.

(4) Cripps maintained that he had full authority to set up a real government in India. This authority was specifically withdrawn in new instructions to Cripps cabled from London.

(5) In new instructions, Cripps was told that he could not go beyond the text of the British Government's Draft declaration, unless he obtained the consent of the Viceroy and Wavell. That explains the collapse of the Cripps' mission.

(6) It is clear from the negotiations on the Defence formula that the Indians wished to do more for the defence of their country than the British were ready to allow them to do. Gandhi's pacifism did not enter into it.

(7) The Hindu-Muslim issue had never previously been discussed on the immediate war time arrangement, and it did not have to be discussed.

(8) British officials in India and elsewhere refused to countenance a real Indian National Government.

(9) Roosevelt tried to persuade Churchill to keep Cripps in India and resume the talks. But Cripps did not stay.

(10). Cripps is in the British Government and doing the same wrong to India which he then (1940, after his non-offical visit to India) charged against the British Government. For me, according to Fischer this is the saddest phase of the entire Cripps Mission.

**"Though Frustrated And Disappointed",**

*Keep Watch, India.*

*Bring your offerings of worship  
for that sacred sunrise.*

*Let the first hymn of its welcome  
sound in your voice and sing,*

*"Come, peace, thou daughter of  
God's own great suffering.*

*Come with thy treasure of contentment,  
the sword of fortitude,*

*And meekness crowning thy forehead".*

*Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand  
before the proud and the powerful*

*With your white robe of simpleness.*

*Let your crown be of humility,  
your freedom the freedom of the soul,*

*Build God's throne daily upon  
the ample bareness of your poverty,*

*And know that what is huge is not great  
and pride is not everlasting.*

**—Rabindranath Tagore.**

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